



Note of Meeting 12 March 2015 in Summerhill Methodist Church

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec) Clare (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Fabian (Cllr) Rod, Shelley, Richard, Rich, Helen (Minutes)

Apologies: Norman Treas)

Introductions: Susan invited all present to introduce themselves

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment

Issues and thank you's for Parks staff

- The winter works had been delayed because of unavailability of tools during recent changes to Parks staff and contractor arrangements, and broken Scag blades. In addition, the weather had been unhelpful. Work had begun on Greendown, and dogwood at top of the Hill had been cut. Peter Staddon confirmed that the Council would use its best efforts to complete the works as soon as possible. On completion of the winter works, Rob intended to pursue the issue of steps maintenance.

- Rob and Susan had met once with Pete Staddon and Peter David and once with Keith Hitchcock and his team to review winter works and how they fit with the management plan.

- It had become apparent that Bristol Council was not applying for Green Flags in the current year. Susan advised the meeting that the RHS Best Green Space award is an alternative which better reflects community group involvement and is a group's award rather than one for the Parks department. It was noted that the Parks Forum regarded the award of Green Flags to some sites gave rise to perceived inequities with non-flag sites. On the other hand, the award of a Green Flag tends to raise the profile of a site. It might be possible to fly a Green Capital flag on the flagpole instead of a Green Flag. Discussion ensued about the prospects of Green Flag participation in future years, given the bureaucracy involved in applying and the judging stages.

- In this context, Kit suggested a competition to design a Friends of Troopers Hill flag possibly in collaboration with a local school. Rob advised on the planning aspects.

Troopers Hill Field

- Susan reported on Mr Chris Deane's initiative to improve play areas. Chris had met councillors and then Susan, Peter David and John Knowlson to discuss general requirements. An estimated £65k would cover equipment and infrastructure at the eastern edge of the Field close to the existing play area. A play equipment designer would be engaged to design a plan based on input from Chris and other parents to provide an outline for consultation (including the future of the slide). Susan circulated illustrations of types of possible equipment, and mentioned that a

path would also be needed. Three detailed designs would be offered for children's input (choice of 3). Funding might be available from landfill trusts and it was hoped that the Neighbourhood Partnership would contribute £15k match funding from section 106 money. The meeting discussed grant mechanisms and future maintenance arrangements for any play equipment. Rob offered to set up a separate e-mail address (thefield@troopers-hill) for contacting Chris Dean about play-related topics.

- The meeting noted that Friends of Dundry Park were also seeking funding to improve their facilities.
- The new trees to be planted on the Field were expected to arrive by the end of March.

Work parties

- The participants on 7 February had cleared holm oak and bramble etc close to Sally's Glade. On 7 March the volunteers had included National Citizenship scheme participants and had cleared broom from the slopes above the nursery.
- Community Payback workers had cleared bramble above the path in Sally's Glade. Kit suggested that they might tackle a project to reinforce the edge of the path in Sally's Glade.

Work parties before the next meeting

- 4 April – Easter Saturday and 2 May – Early Spring Bank Holiday, (activities tbc)
- Shelley offered to distribute flyers to attract younger people to the volunteer sessions.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

- The group had achieved six walks this quarter and the new programme was almost ready for publication. The last walk had attracted publicity locally with cameras photographing the participants and interviews –raising awareness of the forthcoming extended 20mph speed limits.

Events

Star gazing (February)

- None of the three dates in February had proved possible for reasons including high clouds, a thunderstorm, and a police helicopter search.

Before our next meeting:

Star gazing (March)

- The Bristol Astronomical Society was able to offer a number of dates during the month, numbers would be limited to five people per telescope. It was acknowledged that the sessions fulfilled the Society's community outreach as aims. A solar observations session had been suggested, which could possibly take place alongside the August Bugs and Beasties event. Specially-adapted telescopes would be provided for identifying sunspots, solar flares and other features. The eclipse of the sun on Friday 20 March could be viewed in Castle Park between 8.30 to 10.30 am. Rod noted that the former Secretary of Society had become the programme organiser, and confirmed the contact details.

Dawn Chorus Walk

- The Dawn Chorus walk on 18 April would be held jointly with Friends of Dundry Park.

Music on the Hill

- The band engaged for Music on the Hill was no longer available. Alternative options were being pursued, including approaching Beese's for a recommendation and checking the availability of the Fantasy Orchestra.

Bugs & Beasties

- An artist using geodesic dome projections was expected to visit the August Bugs and Beasties event on 8 August, following an event in St George Park during the morning of the same day.

Networking

- On 6 March, for the third or fourth successive year, pupils from Year 3 of the Summerhill Academy had visited the Hill and received a talk and slide show, with a brief history of the site.
- The St George Community Fair had been very well attended. The Friends' stall had run out of leaflets at one point, and the presence had generated more names of people interested in the Friends and the Strollers. Kit suggested that the opening hours for the Fair should be 10.00 until 1.00 (rather than 11.00 till 2.00) because the last hour runs into lunchtime and attendance falls away significantly. The date for next year would be Saturday 5 March. We were told after the meeting this date is under review.
- The History of St George Park was to be the subject of a talk at the Bethesda venue on the forthcoming Wednesday.
- The manager of the Bull Inn at Crews Hole had invited all the signatories to the recent application for designation of the building as an Asset of Community Value to attend a celebration at the pub on the evening of National Community Pubs day, 23 March 2015.
- Eileen Stonebridge had suggested that Troopers Hill needed a geology interpretation board. Susan outlined a proposal (funds permitting) to move the general interest board at the Greendown entrance down to Entrance 'E', and replace it with a new geology board. There were no objections.
- Susan had circulated details of the Bristol Parkhive (UWE/Bristol Parks Exchange) initiative (creating a photographic archive) and the training available, sessions at the UWE campus would be open to Friends groups and include making podcast and digital maps.
- For this year's Good Friday service, a Friends' display stand would be set up inside the church, Friends would open the gate to the Field to let the procession through, and take down the display boards afterwards.

- It was noted that the Council had nominated an additional four designated nature reserves. This year marks 20 years since Troopers Hill was designated as a local nature reserve. It was expected that a celebration event would be held for new and existing LNRs in Bristol.

- Susan reported her offer to represent the Friends of Troopers Hill at the pollinator strategy meeting of the Bristol University Urban Pollinators project, (aimed at preserving great places for pollinators and studying their distribution in an urban environment). It was remarked that an invertebrates survey of the Hill would be timely.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

- Rob reported that numbers of Facebook friends and Twitter followers continued to rise.

Newsletter

- Contributions were still awaited for the Spring edition which would be issued during the following week. Articles on Green Capital and Play equipment were anticipated to appear in the Summer edition.

Next meeting

Thursday, 14th May, 7.15pm in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd.